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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 002980

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/11/2017

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SUBJECT: STAFFDEL SOCHA TOLD THAT PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI
CONFLICT POSES GREATEST THREAT TO JORDAN

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Daniel Rubinstein for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In a series of meetings with Christopher Socha, Senior Policy Advisor to Senator Jim DeMint (R-SC), Jordanian interlocutors stressed the urgency for movement toward a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and that Jordan was not able to further accommodate Iraqis in Jordan. End summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Socha held discussions on July 5 with Jordanian governmental and non-governmental figures on Iraq, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Iran, and the Jordan-U.S. bilateral relationship.

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Threatens Jordan

[1](#)3. (C) Jafar Hassan, Director of the International Policy Department at the Royal Court, told Socha that Jordan's greatest threat stemmed from the continuing absence of a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Hassan argued for political negotiations toward the establishment of a Palestinian state with a clear action plan and a reasonable time line.

[1](#)4. (C) Hassan asserted that with a technocrat government now in place in the Palestinian Authority, concrete steps are needed to shore up Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, including the lifting of West Bank roadblocks and the release of prisoners. Such steps, along with Fatah efforts at internal reform, would help Abbas demonstrate that his way, and not Hamas', is in the Palestinian interest. But without tangible results, Hamas would gain support in the West Bank. "If we drag our feet" on visible movement toward a two-state solution, in one or two years, radicalization would be an even more serious problem in the region. The status quo, he argued, served the interests of Syria and Iran (now on Israel's border in Gaza), and not those of the U.S., Israel or Jordan.

[1](#)5. (C) Hassan put the onus on Israel to decide what it wants. If Israel wants peace, he asserted, it must end settlement expansion, stop excavations in Jerusalem, freeze construction of the separation barrier, and engage in a real political process with the Palestinians and in relation to the Arab Peace Initiative. Hassan also rejected suggestions of any Jordanian-Palestinian confederation discussions prior to the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state. Israel and the Palestinians should, Hassan said, reach agreement on broad principles such as on final status issues and on the shape of the state, and then turn such planning documents into a detailed framework agreement next year.

Iraq and Iraqis in Jordan

¶16. (C) On Iraq, Hassan told Socha that there are no quick fixes. He pointed out that Jordan was asked to support the Maliki government, which it did, but that it was skeptical of the ability of the Maliki government to deliver on reconciliation and thus needed to see proof on the ground. Hassan said that the GoJ supports the surge plan, and that any precipitous withdrawal from Iraq would be disastrous. He also stressed that the Jordanians have worked with Sunni tribes in Iraq to convince them to take part in Iraqi politics and to turn against Al-Qa'ida in Iraq.

¶17. (C) On Iraqis in Jordan, Hassan said that they pose an existential threat to Jordan, and that there was "zero" political capacity to take steps that could lead to the long-term presence of many Iraqis in Jordan. He said that refugees who come to Jordan tend to stay in Jordan (note: referring to Palestinians who have stayed in Jordan since the 1948 and 1967 influxes). He also said that Jordan is not interested in undertaking policies that "ethnically cleanse" Iraq, nor would it implement policies that would serve as pull-factors and encourage more Iraqis to come to Jordan. From a security vantage point, Hassan argued that Jordan was playing Russian roulette with Iraqis within Jordan's borders because with them came potential Al-Qa'ida and Iranian infiltrators.

¶18. (C) Hassan noted that Jordan's laws on persons who overstay their residency permits were not being stringently enforced, and that Iraqis in the country - while posing a significant burden on government services and the economy - are given access to health care and subsidized fuel, food, education and electricity. As for providing access to education for Iraqi children, Hassan said that there was a capacity issue, but that Jordanian concerns were not primarily a matter of resources, but instead focused on the

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existential impact on Jordan's demographic balance of the Iraqi presence.

Deter Iran and Isolate Syria

¶19. (C) Hassan said that Iran is aggressively pursuing its interests throughout the region, but is not invincible. The U.S. needs to build a deterrent capability toward Iran, short of military action, and "pinch" Iran when necessary. Iran had its own internal issues which could be exploited via stronger sanctions. Hassan said that Saudi efforts to split the Syrians from Iran over Lebanon have not gone far, and that isolating the Syrian regime was the best course of action. He added that diplomatic visits and overtures to Bashar Al-Asad were not helpful. He argued that Syria needed to be isolated and put under pressure, but that if overtures were made, they should focus on what conditions Syria should meet and what consequences would arise from not meeting those conditions. Hassan concluded the meeting by stressing that if the peace process were not advanced this year, U.S. influence and legacy in the region would be seriously undercut.

¶10. (SBU) Additionally, Socha met with Thamer Al-Adwan, Director of the Foreign Minister's Private Office who made many of the same points as Hassan. Both expressed appreciation for America's "more than generous support" to Jordan through foreign assistance programs.

Hamas Rise in West Bank if No Progress

¶11. (C) Socha also met with the head of the non-governmental Center for Strategic Studies (CSS) at the University of Jordan. The new CSS director, Ibrahim Saif, told Socha that the academic community and general public were skeptical about American policies in the region. He claimed that discussions about a "Jordan option" for the West Bank (such

as confederation) were real and increasing in intensity, and that delay in progress towards a two-state solution between Palestinians and Israelis will further leads to radicalization in the region and in the West Bank. Saif argued that moderates are on the retreat, and that recruiting for extremist groups including Al-Qa'ida would be easy, particularly given the mounting frustration and lack of opportunities for young males. Saif predicted that if there were no progress toward a two-state solution, Hamas would be in a position to take over the West Bank in 6 to 12 months. Saif also said that the Palestinians need a charismatic leader who has legitimacy inside and outside of the territories who supports the peace process, pointing to Marwan Bargouti as such a leader.

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Rubinstein